

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

VLR 2/28/8
NRHP 4/17/8

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Mathews County Courthouse Square, Updated Nomination to include Archaeology
other names/site number VA Department of Historic Resources:# 057-0022; Archaeological Site # 44MT0073

2. Location

street & number State Route 611 not for publication N/A
city or town Mathews vicinity N/A
state Virginia code VA county Mathews code 115 zip code 23109

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

M. Ann Susser
Signature of certifying official

2/28/2008
Date

Virginia Department of Historic Resources
State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

8. Statement of Significance

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Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Politics/Government

Landscape Architecture

Archaeology/Prehistoric

Archaeology/Historic—Non-aboriginal

Period of Significance 1792 to 1957, 1200-500 B.C., 500 B.C.-A.D. 900

Significant Dates 1792, 1859, 1930, 1934, 1957

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A

Cultural Affiliation Euro-American, African American, Early Woodland, Middle Woodland

Architect/Builder Unidentified; Billups, Richard; Brown, William

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: VDHR, William & Mary Center for Archaeological Research

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10. Geographical Data
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Acreage of Property 1.6 acres (same as previously listed, but boundary is defined more precisely)

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing				
A	18	382979	4143602	B	18	383037	4143584	C	18	383027	4143515	D	18	382971	4143530

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

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11. Form Prepared By
 =====

name/title Susan G. Horner Architectural Historian; and Pam Schenian with VDHR
 organization William & Mary Center for Archaeological Research date March 2, 2007; February 2008
 street & number P.O. Box 8795 telephone 757-221-1581
 city or town Williamsburg state VA zip code 23187-8795

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Additional Documentation
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Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
 A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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Property Owner
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(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Mathews County (c/o County Administrator, Steven Whiteway)
 street & number County Administration Office, Brickbat Road telephone 804-725-7172
 city or town Mathews state VA zip code 23109

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Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 36 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the 1National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service, 1849 C St., NW, Washington, DC 20240.

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Mathews County Courthouse Square
Mathews County, Virginia

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7. Summary Description

Chosen as the courthouse grounds in 1791 for its central location within the new county of Mathews, the town of Mathews sits about a mile above the head of navigation of Put-in Creek, a tributary of the estuarine East River, which in turn drains into Mobjack Bay on the west side of the lower Chesapeake Bay. Mathews County is the easternmost county on the Middle Peninsula, defined by the York and Rappahannock rivers. Previously listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1977 (Virginia Department of Historic Resources architectural number 057-0022), Mathews County Courthouse Square has also been designated archaeological site 44MT0073 as a result of investigations conducted in 2006. The Mathews County Courthouse Square sets one block east of the heart of the business district along Main Street. The early brick courthouse, associated complex of nineteenth- through twentieth-century judicial and governmental buildings, and approximately one acre of courthouse grounds are arranged in a horseshoe shape along the north, west, and east sides of the square. The horseshoe arrangement opens toward the west around an infilled ravine that once led to Put-in Creek, flowing 200 feet to the west. A central swath of this open area formerly was a ravine or drainage that led westward into the creek. Filled in during landscaping efforts in the early 1930s, this area has been planted in pampas grass. Several mature oak, cedar, and cherry trees on the grounds provide generous areas of shade. Concrete walkways cross the well-kept lawns, connecting the various buildings in the complex. Lighting along the walkways consists of gaslight-style street lamps.

Detailed Description

Any archaeological information is provided from the *Integrated Management Plan, Mathews County Courthouse Square Historic District (057-0022; 44MT0073), Mathews County, Virginia*, report as done in 2007 by the William and Mary Center for Archaeological Research as Project No. 06-20; and the archaeological assessment of Site 44MT0073 as conducted on September 28 and from November 6-15 and 21, 2006 by the William and Mary Center for Archaeological Research.

Confederate Memorial (057-0022-0001)

contributing object

In the northwest corner of the square, facing east, stands an imposing stone memorial to Confederate veterans, erected in September 12, 1912. Overall the monument is approximately thirty-feet tall, including a six-foot-high statue. Three quarry-faced granite courses of diminishing width support a two-and-a-half-foot square, two-foot-high pedestal inscribed with the title "OUR CONFEDERATE SOLDIERS" and a smaller stone die with bas relief of crossed swords and the dates 1861 and 1865 on either side of the swords on the east face. The south face bears the inscription "ERECTED BY THE LANE DIGGS CAMP C.V. AND THE SALLIE THOMPkins CHAPTER U.D.C.," and a bas-relief of two crossed cannons on the west face.. A tapered shaft with rough hewn base and bas relief of a flag stands atop the die and supports the statue, a Confederate Soldier standing in field dress with a field hat. He holds the barrel of his rifle with both hands, left above right. A raised flowerbed framed by quarry-faced blocks is not original to the memorial, as indicated by a photograph taken on the day of the dedication.

Courthouse (057-0022-0002)

contributing building

Once thought to represent the county's first courthouse, this elegantly simple one-and-a-half-story T-plan courthouse more likely replaced the original building some four decades after the county's formation in 1791. In light of recently

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uncovered documentary and physical evidence, the construction date for the courthouse given on the 1977 NRHP form should be revised from the early 1790s to the 1830s (Jones, 5-32). With the change in construction date, the builder can no longer be identified as local entrepreneur and county official Richard Billups, who died in 1822 several years before its construction. Regardless of identity, the now-anonymous builder appears to have been very active locally. The distinctive lunette window in the courthouse pediment is precisely replicated in no fewer than seven houses in a more than two-mile radius of the courthouse square.

Mathews County Courthouse is sited on the northeast corner of the square, facing east. The building has foundation plantings and fronts on a poured concrete public walk with fifteen-to-twenty-foot grassed setbacks and concrete curbs to the east and north. There are poured concrete walks to the south and west with foundation plantings and large shade trees on all sides. A 1912 Confederate Memorial is sited northeast of the courthouse in the grassed setback between the building and the curb at the intersection of Route 611 and Route 1002. There are two historic markers north of the building in the grassed setback between the courthouse and Route 611.

The one-and-a-half-story, three-bay by four-bay, T-plan, Flemish bond courthouse has an intersecting central front pedimented gable roof with composite shingles and a turned back molded wood cornice at the side gables. The building rests on a solid foundation. The leg of the T is one-and-a-half stories with two dormers along each slope of the leg. Flanking one-story wings create the arms of the T. Adorning the facade is wood-framed three-part lunette window with intersecting tracery sited above the building entrance in the central pedimented gable of the facade. The wood framed entrance has double-leaf paneled wood doors, a rectangular transom with radiating muntins, and hook and eye hinges. Single-leaf wood paneled doors with rectangular transoms have replaced the original windows that once flanked the building entrance. Wood sills, beaded wood frames, and rubbed brick jack arches are typical for all openings except in the modern rear additions sited behind each wing. Nine-over-nine-light, double-hung sash windows are typical. The original windows on the facade were converted into doors and additions were added to the west elevation of each arm of the T. There are two four-over-four double-hung wood frame windows at the attic level of the west elevation. The wood frame gable roofed dormers have six-over-six double-hung sash, wood frame windows with blind fanlights and fluted pilasters. There are three interior end chimneys with corbeled caps and metal coping; one at each gable end. There is also a small central interior chimney at the new rear addition behind the south arm of the T.

The ground floor of the interior of the Courthouse has been substantially renovated and modernized through time. The floor of the court room is divided into two areas: the natural floor level where the public sat and a raised platform area that was occupied by courtroom officials. The platform is raised approximately six inches above the natural floor. A balustrade partitioning the courtroom, and entablature and pilasters on the west wall are later additions. The floor of the public area is covered in vinyl tiles while the platform is carpeted. The walls throughout the courtroom are predominantly plaster with a paneled wainscot; this work dates to the 1950s renovation. Woodwork thought to be original to the building includes the window and door architraves. The window openings are splayed and finished with single fascia architraves with a quirked cyma reversa and astragal backband and beaded jamb. The ceiling is covered in twelve-by-twelve-inch acoustic tile, dotted with fluorescent light fixtures and vents all of which detract from the character of the space. On either side of the courtroom, in the arms of the T, are areas used as offices for

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county officials in the twentieth century, but possibly used as jury rooms earlier. Twentieth-century restrooms are located in both wings.

The attic of the Courthouse remains in a remarkably well preserved state. The doors and windows still retain their original Federal style architraves with quirked cyma and astragal backband, as well as original paint finish. The staircase to the attic story, located in the southeast corner of the courtroom is modern and most likely installed during the 1950s renovations; it is constructed from mill stock and fastened with wire nails. An 1897 photograph shows the original staircase behind the judge's bench in the northwest corner of the courtroom.

Paired Flagpoles

contributing object

In 1928, a pair of large flagpoles set in a single concrete base with a spotlight between them was installed near the courthouse along Court Street.

200th Anniversary Monument

non-contributing object

In 1991, Mathews County celebrated its 200th anniversary, commemorating the event by installing a monument in the square along Court Street in front of the flagpoles.

Revolutionary War Monument

contributing object

The Revolutionary War Monument was added to the courthouse square on January 19, 1929. Members of the Daughters of the American Revolution broke ground for a massive rectangular stone block with a plaque commemorating the Battle at Fort Crickett Hill (Gwynn's Island) and the "part played by American Continental Soldiers in Mathews" (*Mathews Journal* 1/17/1929:5; 1/24/1929:1:6).

Mathews County Clerk's Office (057-0031; 057-0022-0003)

contributing building

Built to replace an earlier clerk's office that stood near the southwest corner of the square, this building's construction is well documented through an 1859 court order, which identifies the builder as William Brown (MCR Minute Book G:191). With brick walls, a slate roof, a masonry floor, and metal window shutters and door, this building was considered state of the art for security and for protecting court records from fire. Major modifications since it was built include the installation of a vaulted corrugated metal ceiling that is insulated from the roof by a layer of sand. This additional fireproofing feature was installed in 1895. After serving as a clerk's office for nearly a century and a half, the building is now used by the county building official.

The Mathews County Clerk's Office is located south of the courthouse in a grassed plot on the east side of the Mathews County Courthouse Square. The building faces east on Route 1002 with a fifteen-to-twenty-foot grassed set back.

There are poured concrete public walks from the curb to the front stoop, along the facade and down the south elevation, with two large bushes where the front walks intersect. More public walks run behind the Clerk's office and along the south elevation of the Courthouse between the two buildings. There are two small foundation plants at the

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corners of the west elevation. Between the building and the public walk stands a cast iron birdbath with an eight-lobed bowl and classically inspired details on the pedestal.

The clerk's office is one-story, three-bay by one-bay, rectangular plan, Federal Style, five-course American bond building with a side-gable roof. The building has two engaged gable end chimneys with corbeled caps; the south chimney has been rebuilt above the shoulder. The building has a stepped brick water table, stepped rowlock brick sills at the roof line, slate shingles, and evidence of closers at the corners and entrance. Stone sills with rubbed brick jack arches are typical for the windows. Openings include five fixed twelve-light metal framed windows with wood muntins, horizontal metal security bars, and metal shutters. Two windows are on the facade and three on the rear elevation. The entrance has a molded stone sill, rubbed brick jack arch, a single leaf paneled wood door with light, and an external metal security door with metal cross bracing.

A modern metal and glass storm door has been added to the front entrance. The south chimney has been rebuilt above the shoulder. There is an irregular patch and extensive wear on the south elevation. Random erosion of bricks is visible throughout structure. There is an air conditioning unit in a rear window and a freestanding frame structure holds the breaker panel.

The two room plan appears to be original as do the two fireplaces. An iron fire door separates the two rooms. The interior finishes are relatively straightforward; a concrete slab floor with brick sidewalls and partition covered in plaster. Fireproofing measures added in 1895 include the addition of a vaulted corrugated metal ceiling (with a six-inch sand bed above), iron shutters, doors and casement windows.

Cast Iron Bird Bath

contributing object

Built c. 1930, this cast iron bird bath has an eight-lobed bowl and a classically-inspired detailed pedestal. It is located along the west side of the Clerk's Office between the sidewalk and the corner of the building.

Mathews Memorial Library (057-0022-0004)

contributing building

Originally built as a library in 1929, this Colonial Revival library was not officially opened until 1934 due to shortage of funds for finishing and furnishing the interior. When the Mathews Memorial Library moved into the old Farmer's Bank Building on Main Street in 1983, this building was converted into a Sheriff's office. The building served this function until 2005 when the Sheriff's office moved and it was renovated as office space for the County School Board. The ca. 1930 Library is located west of the courthouse in a grassed plot on the northwest corner of the Mathews County Courthouse Square. The building faces north on Route 611 at the intersection of Route 611 and Route 1003 with a fifteen-to-twenty-foot grassed setback, foundation plants, and corner plants along facade. There are poured concreted public walks from the curb to the front stoop, along the facade and down the east elevation, and concrete curbs along the north and south sides of the plot. There is an ADA ramp to the front entrance with a metal tube handrail to the left.

Built in a revival style meant to blend with the earlier buildings on the square, this one-story, five-bay by two-bay, rectangular plan, masonry brick building has a side-gable roof with slate shingles and a turned back molded wood

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box cornice at the roof line. There are engaged corbeled cap chimneys at the gable ends. Quarter fan wood slatted louvered vents with rowlock sills flank the chimneys at each gable end. The building rests on a solid poured concrete foundation with a soldier course brick sill and is composed of five-course American bond brick alternating with a Flemish bond marker course. The building has a center gable one-story, one-bay pedimented porch with full entablature, paired Tuscan columns, and a concrete deck. The entrance has a single-leaf replacement paneled wood door with light, side lights, a fanlight transom, a molded wood frame, and concrete sill. Double-hung sash wood frame windows with rowlock sills and jack arches, and single-leaf solid wood doors with compass fanlights are typical throughout. On the north elevation there is a reduced one-story, one-bay, masonry brick, side-gable wing with a turned back molded wood box cornice.

Replacement solid wood doors with modern metal and glass storm doors are typical for secondary entrances. Modern metal and glass storm windows are typical throughout.

The early plan has been altered with the infill of new walls and rooms. A low percentage of early fabric remains; the window trim, frames, and sash are original. The floors have been covered in carpeting and vinyl tile; walls and ceilings are covered in gypsum wall board and some new walls have been built using concrete block. Two jail cells previously used by the Sheriff's office remain at the west end of the building and are used for storage.

Early Jail (057-0011; 057-0022-0005)

contributing building

Documentary evidence indicates this jail for criminals stood alongside a debtor's jail on the courthouse grounds at least since the early nineteenth century and possibly even in the 1790s. When a two-story jail was built in the second half of the nineteenth century, it is not clear what function the older jail served. In 1933, the building underwent extensive renovations for conversion into the sheriff's office. Changes included a concrete floor, sheetrock on the interior walls and ceiling, a pine interior door, casement windows, a new brick concrete extending 30 in. above the roof ridge, a replica board and batten exterior door, and a concrete door sill.

This one-story, two-bay by one-bay, rectangular plan, masonry jail has a side-gabled roof, slate shingles and metal vents in gable ends. There is a simple bed molding below the roof eaves. The building rests on a solid foundation with a stepped brick water table. The building is laid in Flemish bond brick on the facade and north elevation and 3-course American bond brick with beaded mortar on the west and south elevations. The interior end chimney was added to the south section of the building in 1933. There are poured concrete steps and sill at the entrance with a simple wood frame and a replacement paneled wood door with light. A modern metal storm door with light has been added. Nine-light fixed wood windows with metal grate shutters in wood frames with hook and eye hinges are typical. The windows have Jack arch lintels and poured concrete sills. There is metal flashing above the entry door, and immediately left of the entrance is a rectangular area of smooth brick that once may have been protected by a shutter.

A large, irregular brick patch has been made above the water table in the center of the north elevation. There are missing and eroded bricks at the water table and ground level of the northwest corner and west elevation. Just above the water table, in the center of the north elevation, a badly repointed and repaired section of wall is possibly

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due to the installation of the new interior end chimney. Dell Upton's February 12, 1977 site plan indicates this repaired section of the north wall is where a chimney was removed. One of the rear windows has been filled with plywood and an air conditioning unit.

The interior is a single room that was heavily altered during the 1933 remodeling for the Sheriff's office. The remodeling included the pouring of a 4-in.-thick concrete floor, installation of sheetrock on the walls and ceiling, covering with two coats of regular paint and a finish coat of enamel, and hanging a three-to-four-inch-thick white pine inner door. The building needed new casement windows that swung inward, a new brick chimney extending 30 in. above the roof ridge, minor repairs to the roof, a plank door built as a replica of the original, and a concrete door sill. The inner bars of the windows were removed and outer bars set in hinged oak frames (MJ 2/9/1933:8:2). Practically no early fabric is visible with the exception of the window sash. The walls have since been covered in simulated wood-grained paneling and a drop-tile ceiling installed. Wall to wall carpeting covers the floor. Baseboard heat runs around the perimeter of the room.

Later Mathews County Jail (057-0005; 057-0022-0006)

contributing building

This later jail probably was the second jail for criminals. Shown on an 1894 photograph of the square, the building probably dates to the second half of the nineteenth century and was in use through the first half of the twentieth century. A visitor to Mathews in 1941 noted that the segregated jail housed white prisoners on the ground floor and African-American prisoners on the second floor (Street 1941). Currently, the building serves as the boiler room for the 1957 County Administration Building.

Located west of the County Administration Building, the later jail faces east in the southwest quarter of the courthouse square at the intersection/corner of Route 1001 and Route 1003. This jail is located immediately south of the earlier jail. There is a large Rose-of-Sharon shrub adjacent to the north elevation with a large tree and the ca. 1930s privy located off the northwest corner of the building. A poured concrete public walk leads to the steps of the building and along the west elevation.

This two-story, two-bay by one-bay, rectangular plan, masonry five-course American bond brick jail has a side-gabled asphalt shingled roof with a rowlock sill at the roof line, box cornice, simple bed molding below the roof eaves and a metal louvered vent in the south gable end. The building rests on a solid foundation with a stepped brick water table and evidence of parging. There is an interior metal flue and an interior end chimney. The chimney has an elaborate corbeled cap with an elliptical rain guard topped by a stepped brick ridge. There is a single-leaf paneled wood door with a molded wood frame and poured concrete sill on the facade and a double-leaf metal door with metal frame and concrete sill on the west (rear) elevation. Double-hung, sash six-over-six metal windows with rowlock sills are typical. The windows on the facade have wire mesh in glass panes.

Asphalt roof shingles have been added and the south gable end brickwork has been repaired. Modern metal utility boxes have been added to the exterior of the south wall. The rear metal doors appear to be early twentieth-century replacements and the metal flue appears to be an early twentieth-century alteration.

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The interior of the building was gutted and turned into a boiler room and storage space when the Administration Office was constructed in 1957. The north end of the building is an open two-story room housing two boilers and additional services; the south end is limited to storage. Remnants of plaster from when the building functioned as a jail remain on the brickwork. Examination of the brick surfaces reinforce that the door and window openings were added later.

Privy (057-0022-0007)

contributing building

This 1934 privy building stands facing east in the southwest quarter of the courthouse square near the intersection/corner of Route 1001 and Route 1003. Located immediately west of the early jail, the privy fronts a poured concrete walk, and is shaded by an oak tree to the south and cedar tree to the north. There is a fifteen-to-twenty-foot setback from the curb parallel to the west elevation.

This one-story, two-bay by one-bay, rectangular plan, late-nineteenth- and twentieth-century revival style, masonry brick building has a side-gabled roof with slate shingles and a turned back molded wood box cornice at the roof line. The building rests on a solid poured concrete foundation and is composed of five-course American bond brick alternating with a Flemish bond marker course. The building has two single-leaf solid wood doors with wood frames and concrete sills and two bottom hinged paired four-light wood windows with wood frames and rowlock brick sills. There is an exposed metal standpipe. The ladies room has a sink and toilet and the mens room has a sink, toilet, and urinal. Both rooms have half ceramic tiled walls, terra-cotta tiled floors, and baseboard heat.

The restroom interiors are straightforward. The floors are covered in four-by-four-inch quarry tiles, walls are tiled approximately half their height with four-by-four-inch glazed tiles, and the remaining part of the walls and ceilings are covered in flat plaster. All of the plaster is painted. Each bathroom is fitted with a sink and toilet; the men's bathroom has a wall mounted urinal.

Mathews County Administrative Offices (057-0022-008)

contributing building

The 1957 Administration office building is located south of the courthouse and dominates the southeast corner of the courthouse square. The building is sited at the intersection of Routes 1002 and 1003 facing north into the center of the square. Foundation plantings dress the facade with poured concrete walks along the north, east and south elevations. There is a fifteen-to-twenty-foot setback along the east elevation and a three-foot setback along the south (rear) elevation.

This one-and-a-half-story, three-part, nine-bay by four-bay, H-plan, late-nineteenth- and twentieth-century revival style, masonry common bond brick office building has a cross-gabled roof with slate shingles and a molded wood box cornice. There are louvered vents in the gable ends. The building rests on a solid brick foundation. Double-hung sash, six-over-six over three-light, hinged bottom panel windows with molded wood trim and metal frames are typical throughout the first story. Double-hung sash, four-over-four over two-light, hinged bottom panel windows with molded wood trim and metal frames are typical for the gable ends. There are wood frame hipped dormers on each outward facing slope of the roof. Double-hung sash, six-over-nine wood frame windows are typical for the dormers.

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Molded brick steps lead to the building entrance which is dressed with a Greek Revival style surround, double-leaf paneled with lights doors and a multi-light transom. An ADA ramp has been added to the rear entrance.

Mathews County Courthouse Square (057-0022; 44MT0073)

contributing site

The approximately one-acre courthouse square is a nearly-square block bounded by Church Street on the north, Court Street on the east, and by Brickbat Road on the south (where it is also Route 1001) and west (where it is also Route 1003). Concrete walkways cross the well-kept lawns, connecting the various buildings in the complex. Lighting along the walkways consists of gaslight-style street lamps.

The William and Mary Center for Archaeological Research conducted an archaeological assessment of Site 44MT0073 on September 28 and from November 6-15 and 21, 2006. The purpose of this investigation was to provide specific information concerning the nature and distribution of archaeological resources within the project area. Ultimately, the assessment is intended to be used as a management plan for making land-use decisions in a manner sympathetic to the preservation of significant archaeological resources associated with the Mathews Courthouse Square.

The investigation consisted archaeological survey and limited testing within approximately one acre within the Mathews Courthouse Square. Fieldwork involved the systematic excavation of 29 shovel tests as well as four 1-x-2-m (3.3-x-6.6-ft.) and two 1-x-1-m (3.3-x-3.3-ft.) test units within the 54-x-119-m (176-x-392-ft.) site area. These efforts resulted in the identification of Native American and historic artifacts in the eastern and southern portions of the site, including a possible intact prehistoric component in the southeastern portion of the site. Four builder's trenches and a twentieth-century privy were also identified.

During the archaeological survey, 29 shovel tests were excavated over the 54-x-119-m (176-x-392-ft.) project area. Twenty-seven of these were excavated systematically at 50-ft. (15-m) intervals, and two were placed in selected locations independent of the site grid at the discretion of the project archaeologist. Twenty-one of these shovel tests (72 percent) were positive, yielding a total of 377 artifacts.

Generally stratigraphy across the site consists of three strata. Stratum I is a very dark grayish brown (10YR3/2) silty loam topsoil or plowzone, which extends approximately 36 cm (1.18 ft.) below surface. Stratum II consists of a light olive brown (2.5Y5/4) fine sandy loam, measuring 27 cm (0.89 ft.) thick. Stratum III is a yellowish brown (10YR5/6) clayey sand subsoil encountered at approximately 63 cm (2.07 ft.) below surface.

Analysis of the artifact distributions across the site resulted in the identification of one locus with a higher relative density of prehistoric artifacts in the eastern part of the site, between Shovel Tests 20 and 21. One eroded grog or sand-tempered sherd of Croaker Landing Ware dating to 1200–800 B.C. was recovered from Shovel Test 20, and one net-impressed shell-tempered sherd of Mockley Net-Imprinted Ware dating to A.D. 200–900 was recovered from Shovel Test 21, suggesting that this concentration of prehistoric artifacts may represent multiple, short-term occupations at different times during the Woodland stage.

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The historic focus of occupation is more widespread and extends across almost the entire site. Artifacts recovered consist mainly of domestic and architectural debris, including 1,654 g (58.3 oz.) of handmade brick, 2,543.3 g (89.7 oz.) of machine-made brick, 31.8 g (1.12 oz.) of sand mortar, 105.7 g (3.73 oz.) of slate, 34 nail/nail fragments (including two wrought nails), 116 window pane glass fragments, 34 historic ceramic sherds, 170 fragments of bottle glass, and three oil lamp chimney fragments. A small number of personal items (one fragment of a porcelain button and one 1992 dime), as well as numerous miscellaneous items (a crown cap, two pieces of ferrous scrap metal, and 262.1 g [9.25 oz.] of coal/cinder, among other items), were also recovered.

Evaluation efforts involved the excavation of four 1-x-2-m (3.3-x-6.6-ft.) test units and two 1-x-1-m (3.3-x-3.3-ft.) test unit. Test unit excavation resulted in the identification of a possible intact prehistoric deposit in Test Unit 2, four builder's trenches, and an early twentieth-century privy.

Six subsurface historic features were identified during the archaeological survey, each described below.

Feature 1 is a privy dating to the early to mid-twentieth century. Numerous artifacts, mainly architectural debris or bottle glass, were recovered from this feature, including a Coke bottle dating between 1915 and 1923, which was recovered from a lower stratum of the feature. A local informant's recollection of privies behind the jail in the first quarter of the twentieth century confirms the interpretation of this feature as a privy.

Feature 2 is a tree or planting hole.

Feature 3 is a builder's trench associated with the construction of the building currently containing the boiler room. No diagnostic artifacts were recovered from this feature.

Feature 4 is a builder's trench associated with the construction of the building that was formerly the jail. One sherd of shell-edged pearlware, manufactured between 1780 and 1830, was recovered from this feature, suggesting confirmation of the architectural evidence that the building was likely constructed some time during first quarter of the nineteenth century.

Feature 5 is a possible builder's trench associated with the construction of a twentieth-century addition to the north wing of the courthouse.

Feature 6 is a builder's trench associated with the construction of the courthouse. No diagnostic artifacts were recovered from this feature.

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8. Statement of Significance

The approximately one-acre courthouse square includes the early 1830s courthouse and 1859 clerk's office which face a block of commercial buildings on the opposite side of Court Street (State Route 1002). During the twentieth century, the grassy area in front of the courthouse and clerk's office became the site of local and national commemoration and symbolism. Local citizens groups have erected a Confederate memorial (1912) at the north end, paired flagpoles in front of the south end of the courthouse (1928), and a monument to local Revolutionary War veterans (1928) near the south corner of the clerk's office. The south side of the square is dominated by the 1957 revival style County Administration Building, which is still used as county office space today. To the east is a two-story jail, probably built in the second half of the nineteenth century and serving its original function through the mid-twentieth century. Off the northwest corner of the Administration Building is an earlier jail, possibly contemporary with the original late eighteenth-century courthouse. A privy sits between the early jail and the west edge of the square. On the north side of the square is a library building, built in 1930 and now used as office space for the county school board. Previously listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1977 (Virginia Department of Historic Resources architectural number 057-0022), Mathews County Courthouse Square also has been designated archaeological site 44MT0073 as a result of investigations conducted in 2006. Archaeological deposits represent short-term occupations during the Early through Middle Woodland periods (1200 BC - AD 900) and the site's use as the courthouse grounds since the 1790s.

Criteria

The Mathews County Courthouse Square is eligible under Register Criterion A for its association with government. The cohesive grouping of courthouse, clerk's office, and jail provides a glimpse into the early growth of the courthouse square as a focus of governmental and public life, while the later additions such as the 1930 Library, 1934 Privy, and the 1957 County Administrative Building show a continuing evolution of a functioning courthouse square into the modern era. It is eligible under Criterion C because it is a well-integrated complex of buildings and monuments that not only span the history of the county but parallel the evolution of Virginia courthouse squares and remains a vibrant participant in the counties social and civic activities to this day. It is eligible under D for its archaeological resources, which have the potential to yield information on Early Woodland and Middle Woodland lifeways and on courthouse square activities and former buildings from 1792 onward.

Background History

Early and Middle Woodland.

Long before Mathews County was formed, the future location of the Mathews County Courthouse Square would have been a desirable location for occupation. Put-in Creek, approximately 200 feet to the west, would have been a source of fresh water and food, as well as a transportation route. The Coastal Plain physiographic zone offered abundant floral and faunal resources.

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Creation of Mathews County.

Following the economic disruption of the Revolutionary War period, citizens of Kingston Parish claimed to have suffered especially hard. This was one of the key arguments in a petition by 123 local residents to the House of Delegates to divide Gloucester County on November 11, 1790:

...the Bulk of [the] white Inhabitants live in the lower part of the their County & are Distant many of them Near forty Miles from their Court House, that they Generally hold but little Property, & but few in comparison to the many, who possess Horses, that they must, the chief of them, who have Business in Court, (walk) or resque their Lives often over a wide & dangerous Bay in cannoes, that during the winter their roads are rendered almost Impassable owing to the Lowness of their Lands (reprinted in MCHS 2004:3).

Beyond the specific plight of these less affluent citizens in Kingston Parish, the county had simply grown too large for effective administration of justice. The petitioners noted the justices could “scarce go half over their docket” even though they sat in court for six days per quarter (MCHS 2004:3). After proposing boundaries for the new county, the petitioners reemphasized the importance of their request: “...this Division is the ardent prayer of Numbers, it is Countenanded by all: it can Injure None: but if granted...must Remove the Burden we groan Under” (MCHS 2004:3).

Just over a month later, the General Assembly voted to the approve the petition. The legislation mandated that the separation would become effective on May 1, 1791. The new county was named after Speaker of the House of Delegates Thomas Mathews of Norfolk, a key sponsor of the legislation. Born in St. Kitts, Speaker Mathews had an impressive resume as a Virginia officer during the Revolution and as a representative to the state convention to ratify the U.S. Constitution in 1788 (MCHS 2004:3; Salmon 1994:267).

Mathews County Courthouse Square.

As was typical of Virginia’s courthouses, the site in Mathews County most likely was chosen for its location at the geographic center of the county. As architectural historian Carl Lounsbury (2005:54) has noted, “This method of selection often meant constructing civic structures in the middle of nowhere, at a place that was equidistant form all corners of the county.” Certainly, Mathews Court House was centrally located. On the other hand, it may not have been totally isolated, being only a mile or so from the eighteenth-century head of navigation of Put-in Creek, a major tributary of the East River. Interchangeable use of the name Westville for the county seat well into the nineteenth century suggests at least a small community was present prior to the selection of the site.

The choice of site for public land also may have been influenced by the prominent Respass family who owned property in the area. In 1791, a 209-acre tract encompassing the later Christopher Tompkins cottage (located across the street from the south edge of the square) was owned by Richard Respass (MCHS 2004:85). Five members of the Respass family signed the petition to divide Kingston Parish from Gloucester County, including Richard Respass (MCHS 2004:3). It may have been to the family’s advantage to donate or sell the approximately two acres typical for a courthouse complex to the county (Lounsbury 2005:315). No later than seven years after the formation of Mathews County, a subscription for mail service from Gloucester Court House mentions that “Letters are to be delivered to the care of Mr. Henry Rispass at his Tavern at Mathews Court House (Mason 19668:81–82). With large crowds

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gathering monthly for court days, a tavern would have had a brisk business in serving food and drink and renting rooms.

Since the formation of Mathews County in 1791, Mathews County Courthouse has served as the focal point of this rural county's governmental and judicial life; to some extent the monthly gatherings of hundreds of residents for court days made the square a hub of social life as well. Chosen for its central location within the county, Mathews Court House (until recently the official name of the county seat) also was close enough to the head of navigation for Put-in Creek to constitute a small commercial hub that served the surrounding area along with the regular influx of people on county business or enjoying the fair-like atmosphere of court days. To this day, Mathews retains a small town atmosphere. Although the county has experienced moderate residential growth in the past decade, the population is still too small to support megastores and large strip developments. Local residents either shop in neighboring Gloucester or patronize the local stores other business and services, allowing the downtown to retain some of its vitality.

On an 1853 chart of the East River, much of the modern network of roads can be recognized. The courthouse square is defined by the predecessors of Church Street and Brickbat Road, although Court Street appears to be a mere path or open space between the backs of lots along Main Street and the civic buildings on the green. At least five major buildings can be seen on the green, probably the brick courthouse, the old clerk's office, the debtor's jail, the criminal jail, and perhaps the old courthouse, as well as two possible outbuildings. If the northernmost building represents the new courthouse, its distance from the east edge of the green may be skewed from mapping error.

During the Civil War, no major military action occurred within the county. The town and buildings on the courthouse green were spared from the damage that occurred in so many other war-torn areas of Virginia.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Mathews' court buildings and grounds gradually developed into a civic square—a park-like setting intended to enhance community pride. In his study of court buildings across Virginia, Carl Lounsbury documents a trend toward order and tidiness on the courthouse green as early as the eighteenth century. Orderliness was more the exception than the rule, however, as the “imposing brick courthouses” were diminished “by the shabbiness of the surroundings in which they stood” (Lounsbury 2005:315). Based on the earliest illustration available, only minor efforts toward tidiness had been made by the end of nineteenth century. Although a wood post and board fence defined the public property, the green still contained a number of buildings that had outlived their former functions such as the old debtor's jail and the old clerk's office. The debtor's jail, with its multiple shed additions, looks more like a farm building than a formal civic structure, while the old clerk's office may have been used for storing hay. A dip in the fence along the west edge suggests the presence of a shallow, soggy swale bisecting this side of the green.

The 1894 photograph was taken little more than a decade before a series of improvements, or complaints about the lack thereof, began to be chronicled in the *Mathews Journal*, a local newspaper published locally from 1910 through 1937, and then in the *Gloucester-Mathews Gazette-Journal*. One of the first improvements was a more solid, permanent enclosure fence consisting of metal cross bars and supported by posts possibly made of wood. This was

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installed sometime between 1894 and 1912 when a photograph of the Confederate Memorial dedicated that year showed the new fence in the background. In 1911, Mrs. E. M. Blake and Sheriff John E. Miller provided funds for a pump for drinking water to be installed on a recently completed well in the courthouse yard (Mathews Journal [MJ] 8/17/1911:4). In contrast to the modern convenience of a drinking fountain, however, a 1916 editorial pointed out that a poor drainage system caused Court Street to be flooded for several days after a heavy rain (MJ 6/1/1916:4). Eight years later, a more indignant editorial cast the grounds' messy, informal appearance in a shameful light:

Nature provides the decorations for our court house grounds and man provides the desecrations. Beyond the strewing of loose paper and certain dilapidated works of man there is little evidence of human hands in the grove and lawn that could be made so beautiful....

Why not tear down the disreputable vacant buildings, repair the fence, smoothe the ground and make the court house yard a place that commands respect...a source of pride rather than something to be ashamed of (*MJ* 1/24/1924:4:1).

The litany of complaints indicates that very little had changed since the green was photographed in 1894. A call to "tear down the old building in the corner" in another editorial five months later suggests the old clerk's office was still standing, albeit in dilapidated condition (MJ 5/8/1924:4:1). A shooting contest held on the green in 1927 recalls the boisterous, casual atmosphere that prevailed on court greens during the previous centuries (MJ 1/13/1927:5:1). As automobiles became more common in the 1920s, they too contributed to the messy appearance of the grounds. One editorialist complained of the grounds becoming a "parking garage." Alongside the cars were "piles of ashes...dead trees blown down months ago," road construction debris left by the Highway department, "junk thrown out of the jail," and other miscellaneous trash (MJ 3/10/1927:4:1). Finally, in 1928, a "thorough cleaning-up" was reported. Perhaps the old clerk's office and old debtor's jail were among the "unsightly buildings removed." The green was to be graded and a large gate would be kept locked to prevent the parking of cars on the grass (MJ 4/19/1928). Since the county officials employed no grounds keeper, a citizens group had been formed to remove trash and beautify the site with landscaping (MJ 9/4/1930:4:1-2). More extensive grading was performed in 1931 (MJ 4/23/1931).

With the CWA job relief program, the county was able to further polish the appearance of the courthouse grounds. In 1934, local CWA Administrator J. Eddie Callis reported on the progress of several projects. The most ambitious was to canalize the stretch of Put-in Creek that flows behind the green and dig a turning basin for recreational craft—bringing "the navigable waters of this branch of East River to the County Seat." Soil from digging the basin was to be piled along the edge of the green "to form a gentle slope to the water's edge." Some of the soil also would cover a dump behind the jail (MJ 6/14/1934:1:3). In 1931, the square's landscaping also had been improved with the construction of gravel walks (MJ 5/7/1931:4:3).

No Longer Extant Buildings.

The square has evolved over time as original buildings were replaced by newer, larger ones. Details about the first courthouse are included, because the construction date of the existing courthouse has been an item of controversy for many years.

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Until a permanent building could be erected, court sessions for new counties were often held in the houses of prominent local residents or in taverns (Lounsbury 2005:58, 60–61). Very soon after the selection of a permanent county seat along Put-in Creek, however, the local justices had determined to build a courthouse. On October 8, 1792, they ordered “that the Sheriff of this county pay unto Richard Billups Eighty pounds being part of the money Levied for the purpose of building the courthouse” (Mason 1966:77). At the next month’s court session, the sheriff was ordered to pay Billups an additional £65 toward construction. Billups may have served as the “undertaker,” or general contractor, and decided on a design in consultation with the justices. The courthouse structure may have been largely complete by November 1793, when Billups returned “twenty pounds Current Money it being Part of the Money...paid to [him]...in consequence of Building the Court House” (Mason 1966:77). The interior may not have been finished for another two years, however. In May 1795, Richard Billups, now serving as clerk of court (Davis 1993:28), paid subcontractor John Steder for the following work:

To plastering the Court House	£1.10	
To White washing Do	0.9	
To lathing and Laying Bricks	<u>0.6</u>	
	£2.5	(Mason 1966:77).

Apparently, Steder’s work was the last step needed to make the courthouse ready for official use. One month before this final accounting, the first mention of a “court held at Mathews County Court House” occurred in the records (Palmer 1875–1893:7:462).

As the only court record containing descriptive information about the court building, the Billups/Steder account is key to a reinterpretation of the traditional history of the Courthouse Square. Based on the earlier 1792 court order, it had been assumed that Richard Billups was the builder of the brick courthouse that still stands on the square. Billups was a builder, shipbuilder, merchant, one of Virginia’s first Methodist ministers and served in public office, so is well-known in local history (Billups 1705–1857; Davis 1993; Esker 1984:8). Billups’ entrepreneurial skills and reputation translated into rewarding positions in the new county government. Serving as a justice in 1792, he was charged with the important job of building the courthouse. He later served as county sheriff, coroner, and in the House of Delegates (Davis 1993:32, 34).

According to architectural historians Carl Lounsbury and Dell Upton, the mention of lathing and plastering by Steder indicates instead that the first courthouse was a frame building, not the masonry structure that stands today. In a masonry structure, wooden laths would have been unnecessary; plaster would have been applied directly to the brick walls (VDHR 057-0022 file). If the original courthouse was a frame structure, Steder’s bricklaying may refer to a brick foundation or perhaps a brick chimney. No documentary sources indicate where this early courthouse may have stood. It may have rested on the same footprint as the current courthouse, although the William and Mary Center for Archaeological Research archaeological investigations revealed no evidence of an earlier structure in that location. An early clerk’s office stood on the south edge of the square. If the early courthouse was near this building, part, or all, of its footprint may have been covered by the 1957 county administration building.

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It appears that a clerk's office and one or perhaps two jails were built about the same time as the first courthouse or shortly thereafter. Given the date of the county's formation, the justices probably approved the building of the clerk's office in the 1790s. In 1792, the General Assembly passed legislation requiring the each county to preserve its court records and store them in a fireproof building on the courthouse green. The law was resisted in long-established counties where clerks enjoyed the convenience of storing court records in their own homes (Lounsbury 2005:302). However, with the construction of the courthouse ordered in 1792, there is reason to assume that the Mathews justices complied with the current legislation. If the justices followed the contemporary standards for fireproofing, several details can be inferred. Masonry, rather than frame, construction and floors made of brick, stone, or tiles were the most obvious stipulations. Roofing with tile, slate, or lead was so expensive, however, that many new clerk's offices were clad with wood shingles. The interior would have been plain, avoiding the use of flammable wood trim. Arched, masonry ceilings were preferred, but not ubiquitous (Lounsbury 2005:304–305, 307).

By the time Mathews County was formed in 1791, criminals' and debtors' jails were common fixtures on courthouse greens. The 1894 photograph of the courthouse green shows a gable-roofed building with several shed additions labeled "Old debtor's jail." Located along the west edge of the green, this building could have been erected about the same time as the first courthouse, but is no longer standing. The level of detail evident in the photograph makes it difficult to discern the method of construction. The somewhat lighter color of the walls compared to the courthouse and the brick jails to the right, however, suggested a frame building covered in weatherboards. The larger dimensions of the building, compared to the smaller criminal's jail to the right, reflect the gentler treatment and greater freedom accorded citizens imprisoned for debt. During the day, debtors were often allowed to walk outside freely within a prescribed area, usually the courthouse grounds (Lounsbury 2005:258). By the 1850s, it was becoming less common to imprison delinquent debtors, even though the practice did not end until 1868. If still serving its original function, the debtors' jail was apparently not fully utilized. On June 13, 1859, Capt. James H. Garnett of the "volunteer company recently raised in the County Known as the 'Chesapeak[e] Guards' petitioned the Court so that the "said company the use of the debtors Jail of the County to be used as an Amory for the said company until further order of the Court" (MCR Minute Book G:203).

An 1894 photograph shows the west and south elevations of the old clerk's office, but details are difficult to discern. Based on similar appearance of the walls of the later two-story brick jail, the clerk's office at least appears to have met a portion of the fireproofing standards. The long axis of a fairly steep gable roof is oriented north-south and has a brick chimney stack extending high above the ridge. Due to scratching and underexposure of this portion of the photograph, a dark shadow on the north half of the west wall is the only suggestion of a door or window. An entry in the account book of local merchant Christopher Tompkins indicates that the building had glazed windows. On October 13, 1819, Tompkins had supplied 10 panes of glass and glazing putty worth \$1.34, for which payment was levied at the court session of June 1820 (Tompkins 1819–1821:22). Tompkins' store property was only a stone's throw from the courthouse green, extending from the south edge of the present Hudgins Pharmacy property to southeast along the west side of Main Street (MCR LB 1, Plat 375). The early clerk's office served its original function until the 1859, when a new office was built to more demanding fireproof standards along the east side of the green. The original office was not demolished until the 1920s (Ward 1975). According to local tradition, a portion (perhaps the loft) had collapsed when it was used for storing hay (Sheridan post 1983).

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In addition to the larger buildings, smaller buildings, such as privies, once stood on the square. One former privy was identified as an archaeological feature.

History of Extant Resources

Nineteenth Century Development

Although a caption on a 1930s postcard identifies the small brick building, currently referred to as the early jail, that stands northwest of the current county administration building as the “Old Debtor’s Jail,” it is more likely that this building served as the jail for criminals. Typically, such jails were smaller and more secure than the buildings used to house debtors. The date of construction is unclear. A newspaper article reported 1791 or 1792, but no firsthand documentary evidence has been found to support this (Street 1941). It is clear that the jail was present as early as 1829, when it is mentioned in a letter (Palmer 1875–1893:10:568). The jail was remodeled in 1933 for use as the sheriff’s office (MJ 2/9/1933:8:2).

Before careful inspection of documentary records and architectural details, it is not entirely surprising that the present courthouse was believed to date to the 1790s. Its T-shaped plan was quite common for courthouses built during the eighteenth century. By the first third of the nineteenth century, however, this design had been succeeded by courthouses that looked like English town halls with arcaded porches or Jeffersonian temple style buildings with large pedimented porticos supported by Greek or Roman style columns (Whiffen 1959:4–6). In the Tidewater, Virginia, area, which includes Mathews County, the style selected for courthouses in this era “were influenced more by a conservative tradition and limited financial resources than by metaphoric considerations” associated with architectural trends (Peters and Peters (1995:100). The Mathews Courthouse therefore was built in a style that would have been considered traditional or old-fashioned, depending on one’s view, for its era.

Further evidence contradicting the early date of the extant brick courthouse includes an entry in a gazetteer of Virginia written by Joseph Martin in 1835. His description of Mathews Court House, or Westville Postal Village, mentions “the new C.H.” among the public buildings, suggesting it had been built within the previous few years rather than four decades earlier (Martin 1835:229; Peters and Peters 1995:100).

Evidence from the building itself also points to a date much later than the 1790s. In 1983, when Carl Lounsbury examined the second floor, he noted the presence of “mature machine-cut” nails in the knee-wall studs, which were part of the original building and therefore diagnostic of the date of construction. “Mature” refers to the technique of attaching heads to nails mechanically, a process not developed until the late 1820s (VDHR 057-0022 file).

Combined, the evidence from the Gazetteer and the nails points to a construction date in the early 1830s. Further indication that the brick building was not the first courthouse comes from an 1894 photograph owned by the Mathews Memorial Library. In parentheses after “Court House building,” a handwritten caption notes “present,” suggesting an earlier building once existed (MML 1894). Interior details that may have been original to the building are shown in an 1897 photograph. These include a jigsaw balustrade separating the public from the raised area

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reserved for court officials and a small staircase to the second-floor garret located in the northwest corner of the raised area. Subsequently, the staircase was relocated to the southeast corner of the courtroom.

Recent research by Becky Barnhardt (2007) of the Mathews Memorial Library provides additional evidence for the existing courthouse dating to the 1830s. Using court and tax records, Barnhardt has traced the histories of dozens of antebellum buildings in Mathews County. Among these are no fewer than seven structures with a semicircular "lunette" window with intersecting tracery in a full pediment, identical to the window in the courthouse. All of these buildings are within a few miles of the courthouse and all date to from the early 1830s to 1840, including the former Lane Hotel (now occupied by Bullfrogs and Butterflies child care) on the north side of Church Street. This local design trend suggests a desire by the owners to emulate the most distinctive feature of Mathews' most prominent public building. The similarity also suggests a single builder may have been responsible for the courthouse as well as the nearby contemporary houses. The architectural historian who wrote the 1977 National Register nomination for the courthouse square erroneously identified Richard Billups, as this builder, based on the assumption that the brick courthouse dated to the 1790s coupled with fact that Billups was the contractor for the 1790s courthouse. As a result Billups has been credited with building eight structures that postdate his death in 1822.

In 1912 new doors were hung in the doorways on either side of the main courthouse entrance, one for the office of the Treasurer and the other for the Commonwealth's Attorney (MJ 3/14/1912). In 1920, improvements and maintenance included painting the exterior woodwork, cleaning and painting the interior, and cutting a doorway from the left side of the "court and bar" area to the outside (MJ 8/17/1919; 6/10/1920). Only three years later, the newspaper reported another round of painting on the interior and purchase of new furniture for the judge (MJ 9/6/1923:1:2). A 1924 article suggests the exterior of the court buildings were painted at this time (MJ 8/14/1924). This may refer to the yellow and red paint observed by a reporter for the Richmond Times-Dispatch in 1941. According to Elwood Street, the courthouse was painted yellow "except for a bright red band three feet wide, around the base." Street also noted, "The same red picks out the three brick-deep lintels over doors and windows and the two-brick wide supporting arch over the half-moon window" in the pediment. At this time of Street's visit, the office on left of the main entrance was occupied by the County Treasurer and the office on right by the Commission of the Revenue. The upstairs garret served as jury rooms (Street 1941). In 1929, the Treasurer's Office underwent major renovations as the room was enlarged and remodeled (MJ 8/25/1929:5:2). Probably the most important investment in the courthouse during this period was the replacement of the roof with asbestos shingles and copper valleys. Since the job was put up for bids in December 1925, the work most likely was completed the following year (MJ 12/10/1925:4:2).

By the late 1850s, the old clerk's office was in need of replacement. The new office apparently had to meet exacting new fireproofing standards, as indicated in a March 1859 court order for settling the contractors' final obligations:

The Commissioners appointed by a former order of the Court to superintend the building of the new Clerk's office for this County contracted to be built by Wm H Brown; having reported to the Court, that the said Office is now complete with the exception, that the interior thereof is not whitewashed; and said Commissioners as appears by their report considering said office as being fully fire proof & built in a substantial manner according to contract

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except that there is a leak in the roof & that the floor has sunk (the contractor engaging to remedy the defects aforesaid in a reasonable time, and the said commissioners having recommended to the Court to receive said office in discharge of the obligation of the contractor in order to relieve him from any risk that may result from future accident, the Court adopts said report & the recommendations therein contained, provided the said contractor puts the house in complete order in a finished State to the satisfaction of the said commissioners to be ascertained by their report hereafter the object of this order being merely to relieve the contractor from loss that may result from fire or any other accident to said building (MCR Minute Book G:191).

It is not clear which fireproofing features of the office were the work of William Brown. The most essential would have been the masonry walls and floors, the slate roof, and perhaps the metal door and shutters. In 1941, Mathews court clerk W. B. Smith said the building was "fireproofed in 1895," probably referring to the vaulted corrugated metal ceiling insulated from the roof rafters by a layer of sand (Street 1941). Besides oral history and architectural evidence, identification of the 1859 clerk's office as the building that still stands just south of the courthouse is further confirmed by a plat made in 1904, which uses the southeast corner of the "new" clerk's office as a reference point.

Probably during the second half of the nineteenth century (based on architectural analysis), a larger jail for criminals was built near the southwest corner of the square, just west of the present County Administration Building. The new brick building had two floors, perhaps designed for segregating black and white prisoners. By 1941, in any case, a newspaper reporter noted that white prisoners were housed on the ground floor and black prisoners upstairs (Street 1941).

Twentieth Century Development

Beginning in the 1870s, Confederate memorials and other war monuments, "the focus of communal commemoration," were erected on almost every courthouse green in Virginia. The dedication of Mathews' Confederate monument occurred just after the peak of commemorative fervor that occurred during the first decade of the twentieth century (Lounsbury 2005:331). On September 12, 1912, the Sally Tompkins Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy dedicated a memorial at the northeast corner of the square (Crickenberger and Crickenberger 1995; MML 1912). Sponsorship also came from the Lane Diggs Camp of the Confederate Veterans. The monument was manufactured by National Marble and Granite Company of Marietta, Georgia. An unknown sculptor carved the 6 ft. 2 in. stone figure of "Our Confederate Soldier," standing atop the column with musket at ease (Crickenberger and Crickenberger 1995). A photograph taken on the day of the dedication ceremony shows the full base of the monument exposed, indicating the large surrounding blocks and flower beds were installed at a later date.

The square's function as a symbolic and commemorative center was further emphasized by the installation of a pair of large flagpoles set in a single concrete base with a spotlight near the courthouse along Court Street in 1928.

A Revolutionary War monument was next added to the square. On January 19, 1929, members of the Daughters of the American Revolution broke ground for a massive rectangular stone block with a plaque commemorating the

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Battle at Fort Crickett Hill (Gwynn's Island) and the "part played by American Continental Soldiers in Mathews" (MJ 3/22/1928:5:11/17/1929:5:1; 1/24/1929:1:6).

A major component in the court green's transformation into a "civic square" was the building of Mathews Memorial Library (now the County School Board office) west of the courthouse building along Church Street. In July 1929, the newspaper announced the award of the building contract to J. Eddie Callis for \$6,773, the lowest bid. The thirty-by-sixty-foot "tapestry brick" building was to be covered with a slate roof (MJ 7/25/1929:4:1). With the onset of the Great Depression, the Library Committee had difficulty raising enough money to complete the work, and the opening had to be postponed until 1934. Completion of the work relied on the help of the Civil Works and Emergency Relief Fund (CWA). In return for office space, the CWA built a heating plant, installed restroom plumbing, and made other improvements to the building (MJ 3/29/1934).

In 1983 the Library was moved into the larger Farmer's Bank of Mathews building, allowing the expanded Sheriff's staff to occupy the old Library on the green (Sheridan post 1983). In 2005, extensive remodeling converted the old Library into office space for the County School Board.

Along with improvements to the square, CWA workers also built the brick privy that still stands on the square (MJ 3/8/1934:1:6).

The Administrative Building dominates the southeast corner of the Courthouse Square and faces north into the center of the Square. The 1957 Administration Building is a late example of the Colonial Revival and tends to overpower some of the smaller, earlier buildings. Despite this shortcoming, the building illustrates a continuing evolution of a functioning courthouse square in to the modern era.

The tradition of using the square for commemorative purposes continues into modern times. Although a non-contributing element due to its recentness, the 200th Anniversary Monument was installed in 1991.

Twenty-first Century Investigation

All but eight of the 29 shovel tests excavated during the 2006 investigation contained archaeological deposits. Those that contained no deposits were clustered in the western portion of the site. In addition, most of the shovel tests in the western half of the site contained fill, indicating that this area was originally wetlands. Historical research indicates this area was a ravine or intermittent drainage that fed into Put-in Creek before being filled in during the early 1930s. Therefore, it is probable that the archaeological potential of this area of the site has been exhausted by the 2006 assessment.

Builder's trenches were identified along the foundations of the early jail (Feature 4), the more recent jail (Feature 3), and the courthouse (Feature 6). Only Feature 4 contained diagnostic material. The pearlware found in this feature corroborates the architectural evidence that the building was constructed during the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. Although none of the extant buildings can be confirmed to date to earlier than 1829, the historic archaeological deposits may be assumed to date to 1792 when construction and use of the first courthouse began.

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A possibly intact Early Woodland component was identified in the eastern part of the site, as represented by the grog-tempered Croaker Landing sherds recovered from Shovel Test 20 and in Stratum II of Test Unit 2. Based on the presence of intact deposits, this component has the potential to provide important information concerning Early and Middle Woodland settlement and subsistence within the Upper Coastal Plain of Virginia. Early and Middle Woodland sites are rare on the Middle Peninsula, and especially so in Mathews County.

The identification of an early twentieth-century privy (Feature 1), combined with oral history from local informants and the fact that restrooms currently stand in the same area, suggests the probability that there are other, earlier privies nearby. If impacts to this area cannot be avoided, further testing is recommended for these resources.

Based on the identification of both prehistoric and historic subsurface deposits, Site 44MT0073 retains sufficient integrity and research potential to provide important information about settlement patterns and subsistence in the Upper Coastal Plain of Virginia during the Early and Middle Woodland period and about site structure/function at the Mathews County Courthouse Square during the eighteenth through twentieth centuries.

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10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The Mathews County Courthouse Square Historic District consists of the Mathews County-owned property bounded on the north by Church Street (State Route 611), on the east by Court Street (State Route 1002), on the south by Brickbat Road (State Route 1001), and on the west by Brickbat Road (State Route 1003). The entire block as bounded by the above referenced streets is the previously listed and currently proposed boundary.

Boundary Justification

The boundary was drawn to include the buildings and grounds historically associated with the county-owned property set aside since the late eighteenth century for the county courthouse and associated judicial buildings.

List of 2006 Photos

All photos were taken by Susan G. Horner during the 2006 archaeological survey and nomination update. Digital photos are stored at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources in Richmond, Virginia.

Photo one is Test Unit 3

Photo two is Test Unit 5

Photo three is Test Unit 6

Supplemental Pages

Detailed map showing resources

Detailed scaled map and site plan

Archaeological testing site plan

Copies of diagrams from 2007 Management Report:

Test Unit 3

Test Unit 5

Test Unit 6

Copies of photos from 2007 Management Report:

Courthouse

Early Jail and Later Jail buildings

Clerk's Office and Privy

Confederate and Revolutionary War Monuments

Library

Administration Office Building

Copy of original quad mapping from 1977

Mathews County
Courthouse Square
Historic District
Mathews County
Virginia
057-0021
A-18, 382979E, 73
4143602N, 4143
B-18, 383037E,
4143584N
C-18, 383027E,
4143515N
D-18, 382971E,
4143530N

